



**“VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE:
A COMMUNITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH”**

Formation Theme: GUIDED BY THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

(Prepared by Tony Ciorra)

Read in preparation for the team meeting: “ The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (Lumen Gentium), from Vatican II in Plain English (sent to all members via email)

Gathering Prayer: On February 9, 1962 Pope John XXIII pleaded for prayers for the success of the forthcoming Ecumenical Council. One person should read the prayer, the other members listen carefully and then everyone spend a few moments in silence reflecting on the prayer that he wrote for the universal Church to pray to prepare for the Council. Make it your prayer and pray that our District Assembly may bring a new Pentecost to Voluntas Dei members in the United States.

O Divine Spirit...pour forth the fullness of your gifts upon the Ecumenical Council.

Kind Teacher and Comforter, enlighten the minds of our Bishops, who responding to the invitation of the Sovereign Roman Pontiff, will gather in solemn assembly.

Grant that from this Council there may come forth abundant fruits: that the light and strength of the Gospel may ever more widely influence human society; that new vigor may infuse the Catholic religion and its missionary task; that the Church’s teaching may be better known...

Sweet Guest of our souls, confirm our minds in truth, and dispose our hearts to obedience, so that the decisions of the Council may find in us generous acceptance and prompt fulfillment.

We beseech you, too, on behalf of those sheep that no longer belong to the one fold of Jesus Christ, that they also, glorifying as they do in the name of Christian, may finally regain unity...

Renew in our time your wondrous works, as in a new Pentecost, and grant that the Church, gathered together in unanimous, more intense prayer, around Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and guided by Peter, may spread the kingdom of the Divine Savior, which is the kingdom of truth, justice, love and peace.

Amen

PART ONE: POPE FRANCIS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Pope Francis wrote the following words:

The Council is a fruit of the Spirit but many want to “turn back time.” The Second Vatican Council represented a historical occasion for a great ecclesiastical revolution, which has not yet quite happened yet...So the Second Vatican Council represented a historical occasion for a great ecclesiastical revolution,



which has not quite happened yet. Through the spirit of the Council, the Church opened itself up to the world; a number of steps remain to be taken however. “

“Let us celebrate the anniversary of the council---let us not make a monument that doesn't bother anyone. We find change difficult . Indeed, there are some who wish to go backwards. This is what is called being stubborn, this is called wanting to tame the Holy Spirit, this is called poor judgment and slow hearted. The same thing happens in our personal lives. The spirit pushes us to take a more evangelical path but we resist. Don't try to resist the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that sets us free.

Don't resist the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord for docility to the Holy Spirit, to that Spirit that comes to us and makes us go forward on the path of holiness....To say it clearly, the Holy Spirit annoys us because he moves us, he makes us journey, he pushes the Church to go forward.

And we are like Peter at the Transfiguration: “Oh, how wonderful it is for us to be here, all together! But let it not inconvenience us. We would like the Holy Spirit to doze off. We want to subdue the Holy Spirit. And that just will not work. For he is God and he is that wind that comes and goes, and you do not know from where. But go forward! This is bothersome. Convenience is nicer!

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

In what ways do you feel the Holy Spirit calling you to grow? How is the Spirit annoying you?

Share one way that you think the Holy Spirit wants to annoy us, to challenge us, to inconvenience us as a District through the deliberations at the 2014 Assembly?

PART TWO-READINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE COUNCIL DOCUMENT

Reading 1: Chapter 2, paragraph 9

God has always welcomed anyone whose heart is ready to experience the divine presence. These are the ones whose lives reflect goodness and who cultivate a sense of awe. But God has always chosen to welcome women and men, not merely as individuals but found together, united as a people who recognize the divine...

The Church is constantly moving and searching, wandering, not unlike the Hebrew experience in the desert...Aware of the absolute importance of its mission, the Church seeks constant renewal.

The baptized members of the Church, because they are consecrated by the Holy Spirit, share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. In the widest sense, a priest is anyone who makes the world and its people holy by sacrificing and praying on its behalf. In this sense, every single baptized person is a priest. As priests, therefore, all the faithful are called to offer themselves to God and to offer the hope of God to one another. They should, therefore, be faithful in prayer and live as part of the household of God.



FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Go around the table and each person shares the one thing that touched you most by this reading from the Council.

Reading 2: Chapter 5, paragraph 39

The Church is holy.

The Church was holy.

The Church will always be holy.

We know this to be true because

Christ loved the Church into holiness

And gave her the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This holiness is made evident

By the many women and men who draw from the Church

The spirit and strength

To live lives of holy goodness.

We are called to holiness by Christ himself...

By transforming the activities and events

Of everyday life into holy moments,

All the faithful grow in this perfection

And the world more and more resembles God's Reign.

So it is clear that everyone lay religious, and ordained is called to be holy.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

The universal call to holiness is considered by some to be the watershed moment of the Council. Share with the group how your ideas about holiness have evolved over the years and how did your quest for holiness lead you into the Voluntas Dei Community.



PART TWO: READING FROM ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES, BRENDAN LEAHY

(The book being read by the delegates in preparation for the Assembly)

Karl Rahner reflecting on the future of the Church, observed that the elements of a fraternal, spiritual fellowship, that is a communally-lived spirituality, would emerge. He envisaged the renewed Church of the future as one “built from below by basic communities as a result of free initiatives and association.” He hoped that every effort would be made “not to hold up, but to promote this development.”

Since the middle of the twentieth century there have been so many new laboratory-like community experiences in the Church that it is now possible to speak of these new communities as an expression of what the “Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 2:7). ...The words of the prophet Isaiah (43:19) come to mind: “I am about to do a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it.” A German pastoral theologian, Christian Hennecke has written that just as the explorers Moses sent ahead brought back news of the Promised Land, so today too, there are “explorers” who can give news of the new thing God is preparing. (Pp. 7-8)

Yves Congar, the renowned French theologian and significant contributor to the Second Vatican Council, noted that people must rediscover the Church “from below, through little Church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity...Movements have been the creative minorities that have enabled many to rediscover the gospel and the Church...(p. 184)

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Leahy includes Secular Institutes as part of the new ecclesial movements that are springing up to renew the Church. What do you think is the unique contribution of the Voluntas Dei Institute to the renewal of the Church?

PART THREE: FROM THE LITERATURE OF THE VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE

Reading 1: From the Constitutions

Following the example of Christ who came to earth to do in all things the Father’s will, members enter the Institute for the sole purpose of better accomplishing the will of God as it is made known to them in His Word, in the events and the decisions of lawful authority. For its part, the Institute aids its members to rely on the action of the Holy Spirit who alone can form in them the filial attitudes of docility and availability to the will of the Father. (Chapter 1, Number 3)

Reading 2: From The Present Moment, Louis-Marie Parent

God makes himself known to the world as a Creator full of initiatives, as a Providence always concerned to preserve, to improve, to make endure; as a Savior always in the process of adjusting, of repairing, of



stimulating, of encouraging; as a Sanctifier clarifying objectives, stirring up our inclinations, awakening ideals, giving the energy to act, to be useful, to serve.

God, making us into His image gives us ideas and the capacity to create. He gives us an inventive spirit. He causes unimaginable initiatives to spring forth in us. He gives us the joy of building something new, of developing our intelligence and our imagination (*pp. 83-84)

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

The Second Vatican Council taught that the Church is always in need of reform and that we are a pilgrim people. What are some of the ways that the Church today is in need of reform? What about the Institute? What about your own personal life?

CLOSING PRAYER: We are asked to pray Psalm 23 everyday in preparation for the Assembly. We ask Jesus to lead us, to guide us, to show us the way. May we have the grace to follow in the way that Shepherd will lead us through the Assembly.

We pray in union with all of our members throughout the United States:

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd,
I need nothing more.
You give me rest in green meadows,
setting me near calm waters,
where you revive my spirit.

You guide me along sure paths,
you are true to your name.
Though I should walk
in death's dark valley,
I fear no evil with you by my side,
your shepherd's staff to comfort me.

You spread a table before me
as my foes look on.
You soothe my head with oil;
My cup is more than full.

Goodness and love will tend me
every day of my life
I will dwell in the house of the Lord
as long as I shall live.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen